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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IAEA](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: IAEA DG RACE: ARGENTINA WILLING TO CONSIDER
SPONSORING PFIRTER'S CANDIDACY, BUT WANTS HIGH-LEVEL REQUEST

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 201

[1](#)B. USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 67

[1](#)C. USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 132

Classified By: Ambassador Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: According to senior Argentina MFA advisor Rafael Grossi, Argentina will consider endorsing Argentine citizen Rogelio Pfirter as a compromise candidate for Director General of the IAEA if it receives high-level requests from the United States and a couple of other European or P5 governments. The GOA needs to hear at a high level (according to a source, the Foreign Minister level) that we would view such a step as helpful to non-proliferation and to resolving the leadership issue at the IAEA. One early opportunity would be the planned meeting between the Secretary and Foreign Minister Taiana on April 7.
End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In the wake of inconclusive voting in Vienna on the new Director General for the IAEA (reftel C), the Government of Argentina (GOA) continues to suggest its willingness to formally endorse Argentine diplomat Rogelio Pfirter, currently DG of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Rafael Grossi, a senior advisor to Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana and the MFA's Director General for Political Coordination, told Poloff March 26 that, consistent with the message to us in late February (reftel A), the GOA remained open to supporting Pfirter if it would be perceived as a helpful, positive contribution to the IAEA and to non-proliferation. In a follow-up call March 27, Grossi noted that now a number of candidates would be coming up, some well-qualified and others less so. He speculated that the Japanese would continue to back Governor Yukiya Amano. In this environment in particular, Argentina would need to know that its endorsement of Pfirter would be seen as a contribution rather than as a complication.

[1](#)3. (C) Grossi said that he personally believed a high-level request from the USG to senior leadership in the GOA would be required to elicit Argentine action. Grossi noted that there would be a "couple of opportunities" for a U.S. message "in coming weeks," suggesting the request should come at least at the Foreign Minister level. On March 27, he suggested that requests from a couple of European countries would be useful. Even more powerful, he went on, would be a request with significant P5 support. He thought that both Russia and China were well-disposed toward Pfirter.

[1](#)4. (C) DCM on March 26 queried and received a similar message from Ambassador Elsa Kelly (protect), a long-serving Argentine diplomat who until her retirement six weeks ago was head of the MFA's Directorate on International Security, Nuclear and Space Affairs (DIGAN). Kelly said, although she could "not guarantee it," she understood from her sources close to FM Taiana that he would agree to endorse Pfirter if asked by the USG and other countries. (Note: DIGAN's current head, Gustavo Ainchil, referred Poloff to Grossi when asked on March 26. End Note.) Kelly's information is consistent the query the Ambassador received from Taiana's chief of staff on February 26 about our views on the IAEA race (reftel A).

15. (SBU) A story early in the week (March 23) in leading daily "Clarín" took issue with the GOA for missing a historic opportunity by not backing Pfirter. The story suggested that the Kirchner Administration was unwilling to back him because he had been Ambassador to London under former President Menem. In addition, news services suggested the GOA was reluctant to have Pfirter head the IAEA because it did not want to risk finding itself in the middle of a confrontation between the United States and Europe over Iran.

16. (C) Grossi told Poloff March 26 that the media stories were based on old criticisms and did not reflect any new GOA decision for or against Pfirter. He suggested that they were based on innuendo. Asked early in the week by DCM about the same stories, Ambassador Kelly said they contained some truth in that the current GOA leadership was not inclined to support Pfirter because he was not one of their own. As to the concern that Pfirter as IAEA DG could put Argentina in a delicate position on Iran, Grossi said that he had never heard that concern raised within the Ministry.

When to Approach the GOA

17. (C) Should Washington determine that a Pfirter candidacy would meet US interests, several opportunities are available for a high-level demarche. The Secretary is scheduled to meet Foreign Minister Taiana in Washington on April 7. President Fernandez de Kirchner and POTUS will be in London together for the G-20 on April 2, and again for the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago on April 17-19, though there is no bilateral arranged yet.

18. (C) Comment: Earlier, Taiana's Chief of Staff suggested that Argentina was hesitant to look like it was trying to get in between the South African and Japanese candidates. Similar concerns might arise as new candidates emerge. Argentina will be most comfortable moving forward if we can make a case that Pfirter would gather momentum from several key countries and that his candidacy would not involve Argentina in a divisive contest at the next vote.

WAYNE